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OPINIONS OF CITY HOME ECONOMICS SUPERVISORS ON THE EMPLOYMENT EMPHASIS IN HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL.

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THE STUDY ATTEMPTED TO DISCOVER WHAT LARGE CITY SCHOOLS WERE DOING TO PREPARE HOME ECONOMICS STUDENTS FOR EMPLOYMENT AND TO DETERMINE THE ATTITUDES OF CITY SUPERVISORS TOWARD THIS EMPLOYMENT EMPHASIS AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF HOW IT COULD BE DEVELOPED. OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES SENT TO 145 CITY SUPERVISORS IN THE UNITED STATES, 71 PERCENT WERE RETURNED COMPLETED. OVER 79 PERCENT OF THE SUPERVISORS AGREED THAT OCCUPATIONAL PREPARATION WAS AN EMERGING TREND, AND 75 PERCENT FELT THIS WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH THE HOMEMAKING PROGRAM. ACTIVITY RELATED TO OCCUPATIONAL PREPARATION IN HOME ECONOMICS WAS REPORTED BY 54 PERCENT. SEVERAL FELT THIS TRAINING SHOULD BE OFFERED AT THE POST-HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL. NEGATIVE OPINIONS EXPRESSED WERE THAT SOME TEACHERS WOULD LACK CONFIDENCE IN TEACHING THIS FIELD AND THAT AN EMPLOYMENT EMPHASIS WOULD WEAKEN THE HOMEMAKING ASPECT OF THE PROGRAM. ADMINISTRATIVE ENCOURAGEMENT WAS MENTIONED BY SEVERAL AS A FACTOR IN THEIR DECISION TO DEVELOP AN EMPLOYMENT EMPHASIS IN THE PROGRAM. THERE WAS COOPERATION AMONG THE DIFFERENT VOCATIONAL AREAS IN SOME OF THE PREEMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS. WORKSHOPS WERE PLANNED TO PREPARE TEACHERS FOR THIS PROGRAM. A COPY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE IS INCLUDED. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN "ILLINOIS TEACHER OF HOME ECONOMICS," VOLUME 7, NUMBER 6, 1964. (MS)

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## OF HOME ECONOMICS

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HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION · UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

# OPINIONS OF CITY HOME ECONOMICS SUPERVISORS ON THE EMPHASIS IN HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

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Home economics education has become increasingly concerned in the past year with the problem of responsibility to education for employment. This study is an outgrowth of this concern by the home economics education staff at the University of Illinois. Recent issues of the Illinois Teacher of Home Economics[1] and a recent article in the Journal of Home Economics[2] have explored possibilities in the area of pre-employment education in the secondary home economics curriculum. Due to increased interest in this subject, all issues of the Illinois Teacher of Home Economics for 1964-65 will stress the employment emphasis--possibilities, problems, and issues.

Although the question of an employment emphasis is a controversial issue in home economics education, it is not an entirely new idea. In 1944, Brown and Arneson[3] listed many home economics related jobs requiring less than a college degree and recommended that adjustments be made in the secondary home economics curriculum to offer preparation for employment, and that junior colleges and special trade schools offer terminal courses for those who cannot complete senior college. Also, Spafford,[4] in 1940, included in her text several possibilities for including an employment emphasis in home economics programs. She wrote, "An examination of curriculum materials of vocational programs shows little attention being given to employment aspects, either guidance into

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[1]Mae Josephine Miller and Helen J. Evans, "Pre-Employment Education by Home Economics Teachers," Illinois Teacher of Home Economics, University of Illinois, 5:7, 1962. pp. 1-47.

Mae Josephine Miller and Helen J. Evans, "Pre-Employment Education by Home Economics Teachers," Illinois Teacher of Home Economics, University of Illinois, 5:9, 1962. pp. 1-47.

[2]Elizabeth Simpson, "Selected Issues and Problems in Secondary Education--How They are Being Met," Journal of Home Economics, 55:1, 1963. pp. 9-15.

[3]Clara Maude Brown, and Ruth V. Arneson, Employment Opportunities for Women with Limited Home Economics Training, Burgess Publishing Co., Minneapolis, Minn., 1944. pp. 1-44.

[4]Ivol Spafford, Fundamentals in Teaching Home Economics, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1942. p. 4.

or education for wage-earning vocations. The school may do several things along these lines without interferring with the achievement of its homemaking purposes."

The major bases for the development of an employment emphasis as a major trend in home economics education include the changing role of women in our society, the changing nature of pupil population, the high drop-out rate, and the changing employment picture. It seems apparent that women are and will continue to work in increasing numbers. Women now constitute one-third of the labor force[5] and the numbers of employed women have increased six-fold since 1900.[6] Startling labor statistics reveal that today's woman will work outside the home a predicted average of 27 years if she marries and has children, 31 years if she marries and has no children, and 40 years if she never marries.[7] Approximately 60 per cent of the 24½ million women in the labor force are married and over half of these have children under 18.[8]

Public schools, while formerly being dedicated to preparing youth for college, must now turn their attentions to the needs of the majority who are not college-bound. Programs for the slow learner, and work-study programs which will motivate possible drop-outs, and prepare them to take their places in society, are being added to the curriculum of many schools. Statistics reveal that unskilled jobs are rapidly decreasing, and skilled, semiskilled, and service occupations are increasing. Many of these service jobs are directly or indirectly related to home economics. In the light of these facts, it seems apparent to this writer that a realistic home economics program should include some preparation for employment and the recognition of the dual responsibilities which the young woman of today will be expected to assume.

These factors led to the investigation by Glenna Blunier, in 1962-63, of opinions of state supervisors of home economics education concerning the inclusion of an employment emphasis in the secondary home economics curriculum.[9] The present study is a follow-up investigation of opinions of city supervisors concerning the same subject.

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[5]United States Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, American Women, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1963. p. 27.

[6]Frank Johnson, Working Women and Their Significance as a Market Sector: A Pilot Study, thesis, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, p. 5.

[7]California State Department of Education, Bureau of Homemaking Education, Technical and Semiprofessional Jobs for Women, Progress Report, Sacramento, 1962. p. 7.

[8]Frank Johnson, op. cit., p. 2.

[9]Glenna Blunier, "Opinions of Home Economics Supervisors on the Wage-Earning Emphasis in Home Economics Education at the Secondary Level," Conference Proceedings, A New Look at the Vocational Purposes of Home Economics Education, Fall, 1963.

## Purpose of the Study

A major purpose of this study was to discover what activities are being carried out in various cities concerning education for employment in home economics education. Other purposes were to determine the prevailing interest and attitudes of city supervisors toward including an employment emphasis in the secondary home economics curriculum and to determine supervisors' perceptions of how the emphasis could be developed.

## Procedure

The study involved a survey of the opinions of city supervisors and, in a few cases, heads of departments, in large cities of the 50 states.

### Respondents

Opinions of supervisors in large cities were sought as it was felt that urban and industrial areas could offer more appropriate work experiences and thus might be more active in developing employment programs in home economics and have a more positive attitude than those in rural areas.

In order to secure data, questionnaires were sent to city supervisors in all cities in the United States over 100,000 in population. Twelve states had no city of this size. In order to have a more representative sampling, a questionnaire was sent to the largest city, or a representative city, in each of these states. A cover letter introduced the questionnaire and explained its purposes. Names and addresses of some city supervisors were not available. In such cases, another letter was sent to the school superintendent introducing the project and requesting him to forward the cover letter and questionnaire to the supervisor of home economics. An addressed and stamped envelope was enclosed to encourage a prompt return.

A total of 145 questionnaires were sent.

### Method of Collecting Data

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire developed by the investigator and based on the kinds of questions used by Glenna Blunier in the 1962-63 study of state supervisors' opinions. City supervisors were asked to indicate their opinions as to whether they agreed, disagreed, or were undecided on seven statements concerning the employment emphasis in secondary home economics education. Responses were made by checking appropriate columns. Another part of the questionnaire asked respondents to check the way or ways each felt the emphasis should be developed. Two open-end items were included to gain information concerning recent activities in that city, if any, and of materials related to the employment emphasis in home economics education.

The first draft of the questionnaire was submitted to a panel of six consultants: four in home economics education, one in general home economics, and one in educational psychology. Their suggestions were incorporated in a revision of the questionnaire.

## Findings

Of the 145 city supervisors contacted, 71% returned completed questionnaires. Several questionnaires were returned not completed because there was no supervisor in that system. The involved communications of reaching supervisors through superintendents when the name and address was not known may have been a deterrant to receiving a larger proportion of completed questionnaires.

An item-by-item compilation of data by per cent is shown in the copy of the questionnaire at the end of this paper.

Over 79% of respondents agree that education for employment is an emerging area of emphasis in home economics education at the secondary level. This indicates a somewhat more favorable attitude than that of the state supervisors in the 1962 study which reported less than 73% of respondents agreeing. There may be several reasons for this difference. A year elapsed between the two studies during which time more material became available and more interest was generated at state and national levels. The Education Act of 1963, providing funds for employment education in home economics related jobs, was being considered during this time. Another reason for this difference might be that need for employment education is more striking in cities with mounting problems of unemployment and poverty.

Also, a larger per cent feel that education for employment will not interfere with the purpose of education for homemaking. Indecision is indicated by 18% of respondents, while 7% feel that employment education will interfere with education for homemaking.

Response to item 3 indicates that 81% of the respondents believe that preparation for employment does have a role in the secondary home economics program. The per cent of responses to this statement is very similar to that of the 1962 study of state supervisors' opinions.

Items 4 and 5 were included to ascertain the purposes which the respondents saw as the rationale for the inclusion of an employment emphasis in the secondary home economics curriculum. On item 4, 80% of respondents felt that the emphasis would motivate the slow learner and potential drop-out. However, some indecision was voiced. For item 5, 85% saw the employment emphasis as a new dimension since a large number of girls will combine homemaking and employment, and less indecision was voiced on this item. Opinions on both items 4 and 5 are more positive in this study than in the 1962 survey.

However, a striking difference may be noted in the per cent of responses to item 6 as compared to a similar item in the 1962 study.

The results of this item indicate a growing interest concerning the employment emphasis in home economics education. Respondents are almost unanimous in their desire for further exploration of the employment emphasis.

In order to determine how city supervisors felt that the emphasis should be developed, a check list of three proposals was presented plus an additional "catch-all" statement. Respondents were asked to check any statements with which they agreed. The statements were as follows: A cooperative work-experience-study program; a "built in" emphasis by making applications of basic facts, principles, and generalizations to employment situations as well as to homemaking; and an "orientation to work" unit in which students are introduced to possibilities for home economics related occupations and can learn the traits and skills that make for greater employability; and the "catch-all" statement that the type of program will depend on the local situation it is to serve.

The first three proposals received equal responses, while the final statement was checked by a majority of the respondents. The large number of responses for this last item could indicate some indecision on the part of respondents as to the best method of incorporating the employment emphasis into the curriculum, or it could be assumed that no one type of program will actually meet the needs of all situations. The 1962 study involved a different method of establishing opinions concerning how the emphasis could be developed so that it is difficult to make a direct comparison between the two studies on this item. In the earlier study state supervisors voiced considerable indecision on this issue. The cooperative work-experience-study program was selected in the earlier study as a possibility only half as often as the other two methods, whereas all three possibilities are chosen equally in the recent study of city supervisors.

Respondents from fifty-four per cent of all states reported some activity regarding the issue of education for employment as compared to forty-nine per cent of states in the 1962 study. It should be remembered that respondents, in this case, are city supervisors and respondents in the 1962 study were state vocational supervisors. Twenty-three per cent of respondents reported programs in the secondary home economics curriculum which prepare students for employment. Another nineteen per cent reported such programs in the planning and exploratory stages.

Several respondents felt that education for employment in home economics related jobs should come at the post-high school level, preferably in area community colleges and technical schools. Other respondents felt that training through home economics at the secondary level would be in special, vocational, or occupational schools because most high schools are academically inclined and not comprehensive enough to include such a program.

Opinions on each aspect of the questionnaire were divided. One supervisor duplicated the questionnaire and asked each teacher in her city to reply. A summary of these opinions is so divided that no consensus can be reached concerning opinions of the teachers in this city.

A few comments indicated that some teachers who do not at present feel confident in areas of child development, family relationships, and management might be hesitant to move ahead into a new field. Others whose opinions concerning the employment emphasis were negative, reasoned that it would weaken the preparation for homemaking aspect of the program.

Several respondents mentioned encouragement by administrators as a factor in their decision to develop an employment emphasis in the secondary home economics program.

Another interesting aspect of some of the pre-employment programs is the amount of cooperation developing with other vocational areas. One program combined business education and home economics education in order to prepare students for employment. An unusual program, which utilized the combined efforts of all vocational teachers in the school, was entitled "Diversified Cooperative Training Program."

The final question asked respondents to list any materials related to the employment emphasis with which they were familiar. Some references obtained from this questionnaire are included in "Bibliography on the Employment Emphasis in Home Economics Education" to be printed in the Illinois Teacher of Home Economics.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate an increasing interest and concern on the part of supervisors throughout the nation for the employment emphasis in the secondary home economics curriculum. In order to prepare secondary teachers to meet this challenge, workshops are being planned on the campuses of several colleges and universities for the summer of 1964. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 will help finance training at the secondary level in home economics related jobs. With funds becoming available and the implications of President Johnson's recently declared "war on poverty," we will have to agree that the employment emphasis has become a definite "trend" in home economics education.

## QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE EMPLOYMENT EMPHASIS IN HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION IN THE SECONDARY LEVEL

**Please mark your reactions to the following statements in the appropriate column.**

| | Agree | Undecided | Disagree | No Response |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Education for employment is an emerging area of emphasis in home economics at the secondary level. | 79* | 11 | 9 | 0 |
| 2. Education for employment in the secondary home economics curriculum will interfere with education for homemaking. | 7 | 18 | 74 | 1 |
| 3. Preparation for employment has no place in the secondary home economics curriculum. | 2 | 16 | 8 | 1 |
| 4. Emphasis on preparation for employment in secondary home economics would be especially helpful for motivating the slow learner and potential dropout. | 80 | 16 | 2 | 2 |
| 5. Education for employment can add a new dimension to home economics in the secondary school since a large proportion of girls will combine employment and homemaking. | 85 | 10 | 3 | 2 |
| 6. Interest in my geographic area concerning the employment emphasis in home economics education is growing. | 69 | 19 | 9 | 3 |
| 7. I am interested in exploring the possibilities for education for employment in home economics programs at the secondary level. | 96 | 1 | 2 | 1 |

*Per cent of total responses are reported in each column for each item

**Please check in the appropriate box any of the following statements with which you agree.**

/38%/ a. as a cooperative work-experience-study program with contributions from all vocational areas such as home economics, trade and industrial education, and business education.

/38%/ b. by making applications of basic facts, principles, and generalizations to employment situations as well as to homemaking.

/38%/ c. as an "orientation to work" unit where students are introduced to possibilities for home economics related occupations and can learn the traits and skills that make for greater employability.

d. All three of the above are applicable in certain situations; the type of program developed will depend on the local situation it is to serve.

Recent activities in my metropolitan area related to education for employment in the secondary home economics curriculum include _____

_____

_____

_____

Have you recently found materials which are related to education for employment in the secondary home economics curriculum. (Please list and give source) _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Thank you! I will be appreciative if you will return this as soon as possible. Return to: Ruth Whitmarsh, c/o Dr. Elizabeth Simpson, Office of Home Economics Education, 334 Gregory Hall, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois.**